

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
WESTERN DIVISION**

JEFFERSON GRIFFIN,

Plaintiff,

v.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF
ELECTIONS,

Defendant.

Case No. 5:24-cv-00724-M

DECLARATION OF PETER MELLMAN

I, Peter Mellman, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am over the age of 18, have personal knowledge of the facts below, and can competently testify to their truth.
2. My name is Peter Mellman, and I am the Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”) at VoteVets Action Fund (“VoteVets”) where I have worked for over 18 years.
3. VoteVets is a national non-profit organization dedicated to elevating the voices of veterans and their families on issues that affect the lives of those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces, including on issues like veterans’ care. VoteVets was founded in 2006 and is organized under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, to advocate for issues that impact troops, veterans, and their families.
4. As CFO, my responsibilities include managing personnel as well as the budget and expenditures of programs that are dedicated to serving over 1.5 million subscribers across the country, including thousands in North Carolina, composed mainly of active-duty military members, veterans, and their families. These individuals have taken affirmative steps to become a recipient of communications from us.

5. In addition to its affirmative subscribers, VoteVets is dedicated to serving all active servicemembers, including those who are deployed, and veterans, by providing the support, training, and tools they need to face issues at home, such as utilizing their voting rights and combating disinformation, as well as challenges in other policy areas like health care, jobs, and more.

6. Increasing voter turnout among military personnel, veterans, and their families, especially those who are overseas, is critical to VoteVets' mission, as we believe that turning out these groups of voters will benefit all Americans by engaging people who have served their country in the civic process.

7. To advance this goal, VoteVets dedicates significant resources, such as money, personnel time, and volunteer efforts, to ensure that their constituents—military and veteran voters, as well as their families—can participate in the franchise.

8. VoteVets and its partners have also built a first-of-its-kind military voter file containing approximately 14 million records of veterans and military family members, including thousands of records for voters in North Carolina, to help the organization focus its mobilization, education, and turnout efforts. VoteVets relies on this voter file to contact military voters and facilitate veteran-to-veteran communications to assist with ensuring that military and veteran votes are counted.

9. Using this file, VoteVets and its partners sent over 2.5 million texts to 1.5 million military voters, including those overseas, in connection with the 2024 general election, and saw a substantial increase in turnout participation among contacted voters.

10. This outreach is critical because military voters and veterans often face challenges in exercising their right to vote. Many active-duty servicemembers and their families are deployed away from home, which makes it physically impossible for them to vote in person. As a result, these voters are reliant on laws like the Uniformed And Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (“UOCAVA”) and the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (“UMOVA”) to participate in the franchise through voting by mail.

11. Because the constituents and subscribers VoteVets serves are so dependent on mail voting, a large part of the organization's voter education mission and programming efforts focus on absentee voting, including by educating voters about laws like UOCAVA and UMOVA, which ensure military voters and their families can successfully cast ballots. This is true in North Carolina as well as in other states across the country.

12. To that end, VoteVets also educates military voters about the rules for properly returning their ballots so that each and every vote will get counted. This includes providing information about who may vote under laws like UOCAVA and UMOVA, as well as the requirements to cast ballots under these laws. VoteVets is unable to perform that work in a reliable manner if election rules can be challenged, disrupted, or altered *after* an election has occurred.

13. This litigation challenges thousands of ballots cast by North Carolinians, including VoteVets' constituents serving overseas who have voted under UOCAVA and UMOVA. These challenges threaten to disenfranchise VoteVets' supporters and constituents who participated in the 2024 election according to existing law with the rightful expectation that their ballots will be counted. VoteVets is extremely disturbed at the prospect that military voters and their families—who did everything right—will have their votes thrown out through no fault of their own, weeks after the election has already occurred.

14. Disenfranchising VoteVets' constituents also threatens our mission to elevate the voices of military personnel, veterans, and their families on issues that affect their lives and ensure their civic engagement.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date: 12/20/2024

By:  _____

Peter Mellman
Chief Financial Officer
VoteVets Action Fund